THE NEW NATION

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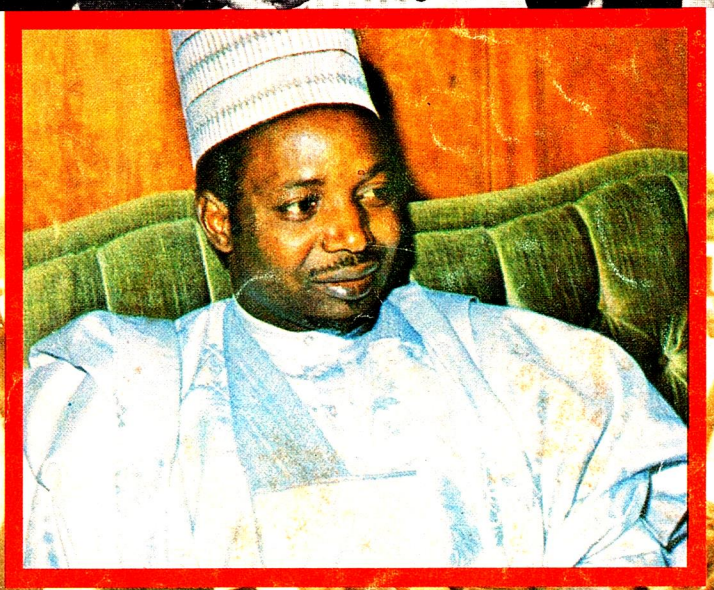
BOBBY BENSON AT 60

"Life begins at 60"

'I shall return'

–Balarabe



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"How my father was killed"

Yomi Akintola

'Just about the same time, the telephone rang and the panicky voice of Chief Remi FaniKayode's wife came through.'

THE NEW NATION

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PUBLISHER:
Gbolabo Ogunsanwo

FEATURES EDITOR
Kenny Haastrup Jnr

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Olatunji Dare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Funso Al Haastrup

ART EDITOR
Alphonsus Vincent

COMPOSER
Joseph Uji Mordi

CAMERAMAN
Nathaniel Okitikan

BUSINESS MANAGER
Chiedu Mbonu

SALES SUPERVISORS
Andy Nwabueze (Eastern Area)
Adebayo Ayandele (Northern Area)
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SECRETARY
Edet Okon

ADMIN OFFICER
A. A. Efejuku

U. K. ADVERTISEMENT REPRESENTATIVES
Colin Turner (Trade Press) Limited
122 Shaftsbury Avenue
London W1V8HA
Tel. 01-734 3052

LONDON CORRESPONDENT
Gerd Treuhaft

U.K. SALES
J. F. Ansell (Distributors) Ltd.
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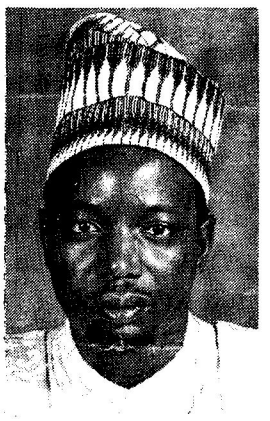

"I WILL BE BACK". These were the last words of Alhaji Abdulkadir Balarabe Musa, after news reached him that the Acting Judge of Kaduna State had ruled that he was constitutionally impeached and his deputy should be sworn in as governor. Balarabe Musa has been the stormy petrel of Kaduna State and the cynosure of all eyes since the return of the second republic. In a candid, down-to-earth interview with our man Kenny Haastrup Jnr., Alhaji Balarabe bared his heart to our readers.

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Chief Yomi Akintola has not achieved as much prominence as his late father who was right in the centre of the great dramatic events of the sixties but yet he is making his quiet mark in politics. The representative for Ogbomosho at the National Assembly, Chief Yomi Akintola among other things look back on those harrowing days in January 1966 when his father was killed. He also talked about contemporary Nigerian politics and his future.

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BOBBY BENSON could easily pass as the Dean of Nigerian musicians. Name them – Victor Olaiya, Eddy Okonta, Zeal Onyia. Virtually all the illustrious names in Nigerian music have passed through his hands. Bobby now looks back at age 60 on a lifetime dedicated to music.

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BALARABE :

The Struggle

The man whose name has been in the main issue of debate in Nigeria for the past many months and most especially in the last few weeks stands at 5ft 6in tall slighly built frame, a cherubic look on his face and from what can easily be discernible from his face, was most composed – totally at peace with himself and not obviously worried about his constantly changing political fortunes.

Almost everybody who has met him since 1979 especially those that have had direct dealings with him during his present political crisis have remarked about the inscrutable unpertubability of Alhaji Abdulkadir Balarabe Musa.

Meeting him is almost an anti-climax. For someone who has been the talk of the nation, darling to some, satan to others, whose head it would give a great pleasure to a number of political notables in Kaduna State to have for dinner, Alhaji Balarabe was the epitome of missionary relaxation. But for his now well-known face, which has been served on the front page of all the newspapers, and the screens of all television sets in Nigeria time without number in the last year, had he introduced himself as the man Balarabe, you could have passed him off as a crude joke, an unserious imposter. How could he possibly be Balarabe, "Man of the year," "Hero of the Second Republic" self-proclaimed Marxist revolutionary. He couldn't possibly be.

He was wearing his usual Hausa outfit without the full top. His cap was slightly titled to one side, and was like some visiting foreign leader on whom local dignitaries were coming to pay respects.

One after the other, they came – from the Unity Party of Nigeria, from the Great Nigeria People's Party and from his People's Redemption Party to share their thoughts on the Kaduna imbroglio with him and all left.

No sooner had he escorted them to the gates, returning to his living room than another delegation was at the door. This was Balarabe Musa in 1981 at the Kaduna State Guest House fighting a desperate revolutionary fight for political survival.

To say that Balarabe is not a fighter is a grivous understatement. No matter your shade of political opinion, you just have to agree that that man is a fighter.

In the month of June, at the height of the Kaduna State crisis, Balarabe's lawyers were in court almost every day, filing this suit, seeking that injunction, so much so that the public almost lost count of the suits he had in court. While all this was going on, he supported his stand with an advertisement propaganda campaign in major newspapers drawing attention to what he believed was the justness of his cause. But one suit was more imoortant than the other. It was the suit in which he sought a ruling on whether or not he had been legally and constitutionally removed from office as governor.

It was a few hours before the judgement. As usual, the Kaduna State House in Lagos was besieged by reporters wanting to know his reaction to this expected historic judgement. The New Nation was the last newspaper he spoke to before he heard Mr. Justice Umaru Abdullah's judgement saying that his tenure of office had ceased. And his message to his supporters and to all Nigerians was: "I SHALL RETURN".

NEW NATION: Alhaji Balarabe, how would you describe your position today? Are you just a Kaduna State politician or do you still regard yourself as the governor of Kaduna State?

BALARABE MUSA: I am still the governor of Kaduna State and there is no doubt about that. This is in accordance with the constitution and the legal system of this country. The only thing is this. The position is still being contested as it has always been since the 1st October 1979.

NEW NATION: Sir, the impeachment of a State Chief Executive is the final sanction even in the United States after which we have modelled our present constitution. Why didn't you consider resigning (perhaps like Nixon) before the House had an opportunity to carry out its impeachment?

BALARABE MUSA: Well, under the present circumstances, resignation is only for cowards and those whose conscience is not clear. And you must realise that we have made a case against the other side that they were violating the constitution and the legal system and we are in a position to fight this in the interest of everybody. We are not just fighting for our fundamental rights. This is the position.

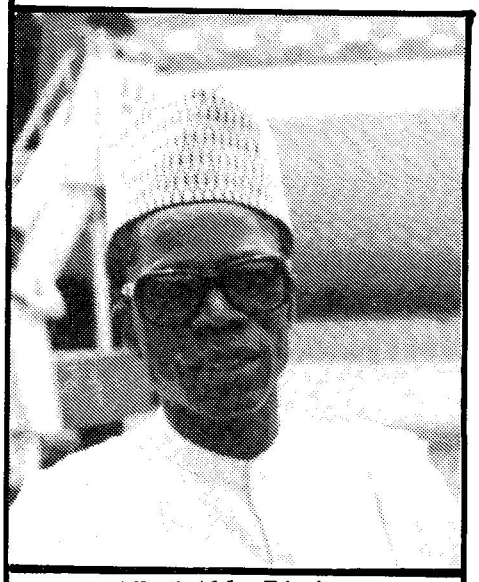
NEW NATION: You said that the governorship of the state is still being contested. How do you mean? By whom?

BALARABE MUSA: Well, you should know that the NPN has always contested

The Last Interview Continues.

Interview by Kenny Haastrup Jnr.

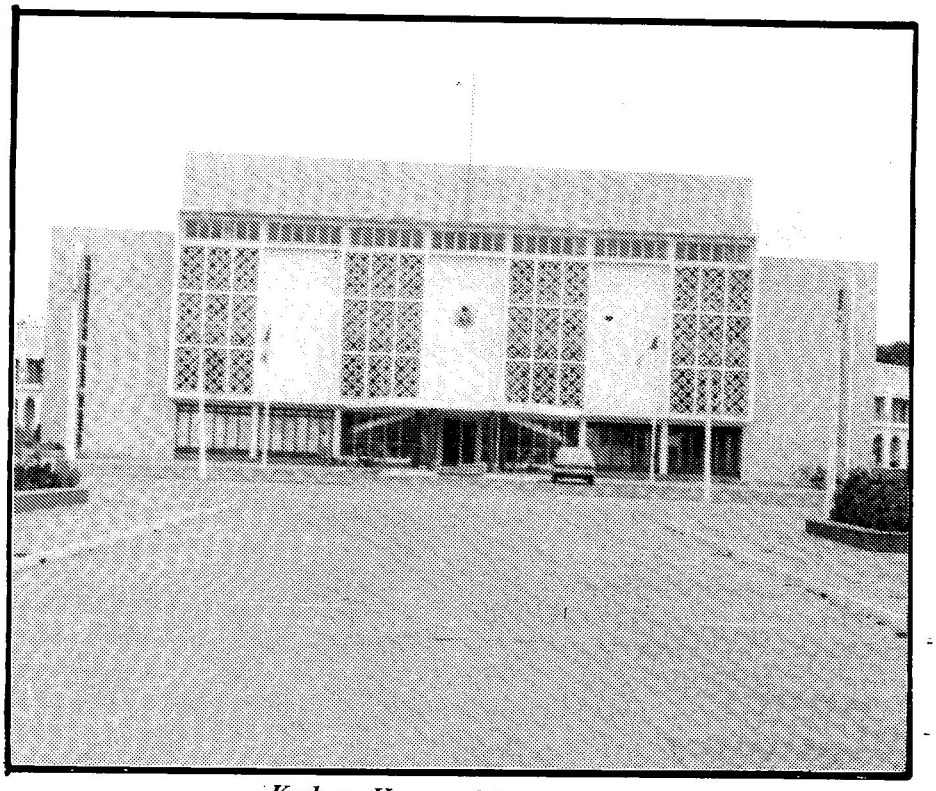
Photo Diary Of A



Alhaji Abba Rimi

Alhaji Dan Musa

Alhaji Dauda Mani



Kaduna House of Assembly

this position of the governor. First, after our victory at the polls, there were a lot of petitions. Luckily, the election petition tribunal supported us but you can now see where we are now. At that time, we fought them and we won. They still didn't give up. We have been having serious constitutional problems with them since 1st October 1979. Now this means that all the way they have never abandoned the contest, to rig the governorship of the state and this will continue indefinitely until they finally have to give up.

NEW NATION: What is your position on the various allegations made against you?

BALARABE MUSA: Certainly, there are no allegations at all. Even they haven't said that there is an allegation. For instance, have you seen the report of the so-called impeachment committee? This is a public issue. By now, the report of the committee should have been made public. This is a very important matter of public interest in Nigeria and the first thing for anyone with clear conscience is to make this public. Yet it is not a public document. Have you received it? Have you got the report of the committee? Why should it be such a secret?

NEW NATION: Why did you not at the time of the impeachment consider it necessary to testify and present your case before the panel?

BALARABE MUSA: Because, as the Chief Executive of Kaduna State who has sworn to uphold and defend the constitution I should not be a party to any unconstitutional and illegal action. It is unfortunate that this affects me personally but even if it was somebody else this would have been my stand. I am not just doing it for my own sake, I am really doing it in the interest of the public. Because if I in my privileged position can't stand up and fight against injustice, how can we expect the ordinary man who is struggling to eat just one square meal a day to fight when his fundamental human rights are violated?

NEW NATION: Apart from political differences, what other things would you say have been responsible for the action assembly took over your impeachment?

BALARABE MUSA: Well, you see, the problem is this. We have different ideological goals. And these goals are very much opposed to one another. As this is so, it is sufficient to cause a lot of con-

State Crisis

Lugard Hall Kaduna

flicts. If you look at it all over the country there is not a situation where two forces are fighting against one another. The forces of privilege are fighting to maintain the status-quo, to maintain their dominance and the forces of progress, the forces of justice, the forces of democracy, the anti-fascist forces are also fighting to seize power from the reactionary forces. Now, these conflicts are known and they are sufficient to cause anything.

NEW NATION: Sir, this statement brings us back to what you said sometime ago at a press conference. You said at that time that the people were living in time of great success and that the old order was crubbling fast while some new systems were emerging. Don't you see the possibility of a return to the status quo if you lose in the court?

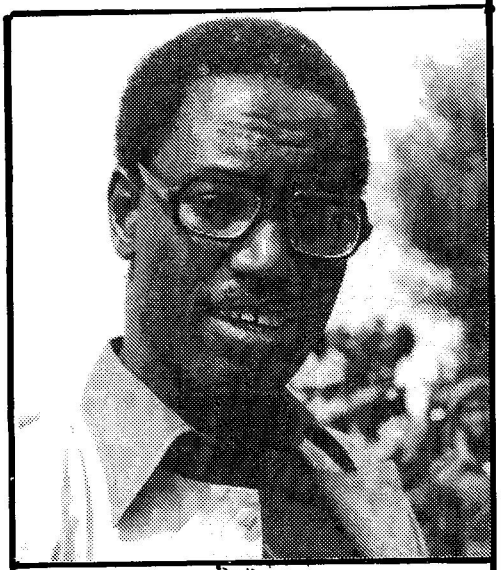
BALARABE MUSA: What do you mean by a return to the status quo? What you are saying is that because the enemy has struck I should hold my peace and keep quiet so that he doesn't strike again. In that case I would be an opportunist, a coward, and not a revolutionary. I've told everybody that I am a revolutionary. What is happening now is a stage in a protracted process. What is happening in Kaduna State is a triumph of democracy over imperialism. It means there is one thing that has already been achieved. The determination of the reactionary forces to maintain their dominance at any costs. They no longer pretend their contempt for the constitution, the legal system, anything about morality and even the people of this country. Now, it is quite clear that they are merely fighting to preserve their narrow feudal interests. Clear and simple. And that is a very very important education.

NEW NATION: Whether the court rules in your favour or not people say you are the hero of this republic. To what extent do you see yourself as a hero of the second republic?

BALARABE MUSA: No, I think this is for people to judge. Not for me really. I don't think there is any difference in my life style now and so I will continue living my normal life until 1987 when I will be no more in a position to contest the governorship.

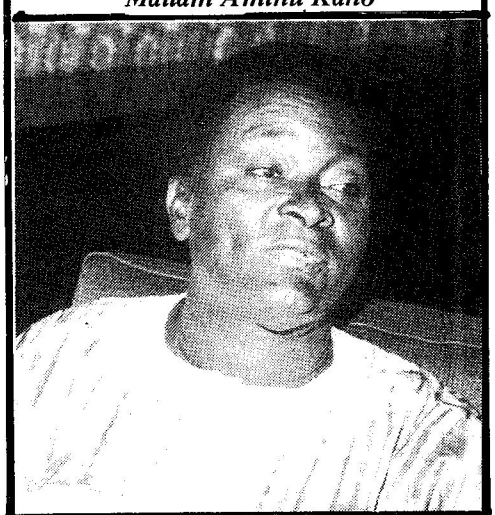
NEW NATION: There is a point of view that you won't have been in this situation if it hadn't been for the crisis in the PRP.

BALARABE MUSA: The crisis in the PRP is as a result of our ideological stand. In the first place this crisis only affects the leadership. The members and the supporters of the party are not affected directly. It is only the leaders of the PRP that are in conflict with one another. They are divided into two camps. One camp is trying to betray the cause of the



Dr. Yusuf Bala Usman

Mallam Aminu Kano



Mr. S. G. Ikoku

party by allying with the enemy. In this case, a section of the leadership wants to ally with the NPN either directly or indirectly while the other side says this is a betrayal of the cause. This is a betrayal of the electorate. We are opposed to the ideologies of the NPN and therefore it was a complete betrayal for us after winning the election to go and ally with the NPN.

NEW NATION: Sir, if the PRP says you are expelled from the party, and the legislators say you are impeached, then what next can you do?

BALARABE MUSA: As I told you this is a mere stage in a protracted struggle, therefore you will see even more things in the future.

NEW NATION: How do you see your association with the other 'progressive' governors?

BALARABE MUSA: Well, our association is progressing, and it is for a progressive purpose, we stand to benefit from each other by this association. We also stand to inspire the people of Nigeria to see the need of a real unity based on principles. We also stand particularly at this time to unite and contain all anti-democratic fascists forces.

NEW NATION: Since the crisis in Kaduna State began what actually have you benefitted from your association with the 'progressive' governors?

BALARABE MUSA: Well, we have benefitted very much. They have been solidly behind us on principle as usual and they will continue to do so.

NEW NATION: Do you still plan to continue your association with them?

BALARABE MUSA: Why not? What will stop me? Nothing will stop me.

NEW NATION: How do you see an impeachment exercise at this stage of the new constitution?

BALARABE MUSA: Well, impeachment is inevitable with a fascist party like the NPN, which is besieged, which has no popular base, which is desperate but which is ideologically committed to maintaining its reactionary control by all means. I know the struggle against the NPN is inevitable. We just have to do it. Even if we can't do it, other people will do it, because it is inevitable. It is a historical struggle.

NEW NATION: Considering the present political situation in Kaduna State, how do you think it will all end?

BALARABE MUSA: No, it has no end. It will continue until the forces of reaction are no more. That is, until the forces of reaction have no control over the fate of the people. Otherwise it will continue like this.

NEW NATION: Sir, suppose you have a chance to re-examine your actions and deeds, what do you regret?

BALARABE MUSA: No, I have no regrets at all. I understood what was doing and I did it consciously and I will continue doing it. But this doesn't mean I shall be as reckless as the others or that I shall be as adventurous as the NPN. I can tell you right now this party has been very very much adventurous. I think all Nigerians are now aware of this adventure and what it could lead this country to.

NEW NATION: Recently, the Chairman of Federal Electoral Commission FEDECO Mr. Justice Ovie-Whiskey said that his commission only recognised the faction of the PRP led by Mallam Aminu Kano. Do you not see another imminent crisis come any future election as a result of this statement?

BALARABE MUSA: What else did you expect from him? Who appointed him as Chairman of FEDECO? Then with whom are we in conflict? Well, he was appointed Chairman of FEDECO by the NPN. It is the NPN that we are in conflict with. How do you expect his position to be different?

NEW NATION: But what if one considers the points of argument advanced by the FEDECO Chairman. He had said that after a thorough examination of papers before his commission he had come to the conclusion that they validly had the name of Mallam Aminu Kano as the PRP leader. Don't you see this as being straight-forward thinking?

BALARABE MUSA: Let us assume it is straight- forward. Is it realistic? Does it respect the wishes of the people. This is politics. What is important is the wishes of the people and how they express them in accordance with the constitution of the country. It is not just what anybody wishes. It is quite obvious that the PRP is under the leadership of Chief Michael Imoudu. This is the reality on the ground. Not under the leadership of Aminu Kano.

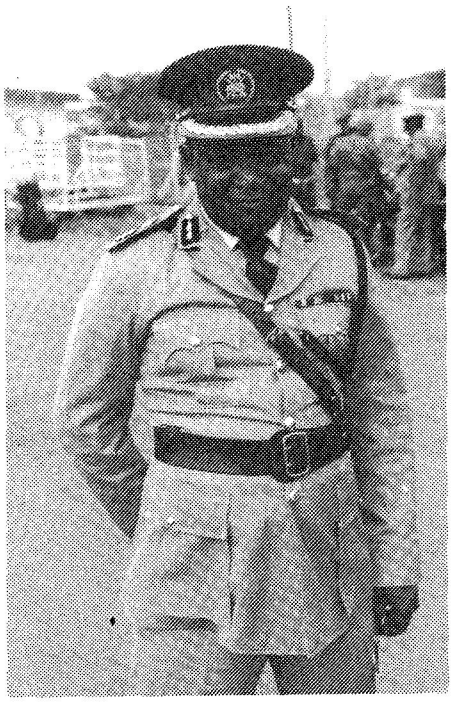
Now which one should we go by? Should we go by the reality and the wishes of the people or should we go just by what the federal government wishes? Some people are desperately wanting Mallam Aminu to lead the PRP so that they can get their way. But the supporters of the party want something different.

Welcoming Crowd at Kaduna Airport expecting Balarabe.

They want the leadership of Chief Michael Imoudu because I believe that is why they joined the PRP. More so, this is a question of reality versus illusion. What is the reality on the ground? We are acting on the basis of a democratic system which is based on the wishes of the people and how the wishes are expressed.

NEW NATION: Alhaji, how far is it true that you did advise your deputy, Alhaji Abba Rimi to take over as governor because you believe you will lose at the court?

BALARABE MUSA: No! I signed the instrument, I think on the 19th of June even before I left Kaduna, transfering my executive responsibilities to my deputy according to the constitution because I was going on leave. This leave was planned since April but it was shifted because of the budget. We were expecting the budget to be finished within April, and I wanted to go I think about the 17th of April. It was not possible. The budget had not been finished with. So I kept on postponing my leave. In fact, we had even contacted the countries I was to have visited because I planned to spend a greater part of it overseas. I was going to Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, India, Bulgaria, Britain, Ireland and we had informed some of them about it. But the budget continued to be delayed and I did'nt think it was proper for me to go on leave while the budget had not been assented to. So I kept on postponing until the legislators finished with the budget. And immediately after the legislators finished with the budget I took the necessary procedure of assigning all my executive responsibilities to the deputy governor for the period of my absence.



Kaduna State Police Commissioner

NEW NATION: In any event, do you still think that at the expiration of your leave you will go back to Kaduna as the substantive governor?

BALARABE MUSA: What is your doubt about that? Why are you doubting that?

NEW NATION: Well .....

BALARABE MUSA: So, you are not doubting that. Thank you. Now what next?

NEW NATION: Do we take it therefore, that what your deputy is doing right now in Kaduna State is what you have delegated to him about a month ago.

BALARABE MUSA: Oh! No. No. The constitution has made provision for this. The constitution, in section 5, has specified my duties as the Chief Executive of Kaduna State. And section 174 of the constitution empowers me to assign any responsibility to the deputy governor or any commissioner etc. That is exactly what I have done. This is the second time I am doing this. I did this in 1980 when I was going on leave. So what is strange about it?

NEW NATION: Since your impeachment by the House, people expected that there would have been demonstrations here and there. At least in Kaduna your base, if not in others. Some people are now saying that the lack of this is a proof that you have no following. What is your opinion about that?

BALARABE MUSA: That is a matter of opinion by other people and you should please note that I am not in PRP to cause or organise demonstrations.

NEW NATION: Would you want to give an account of your impression of the police?

BALARABE MUSA: What is your own impression? Because of all the reports we receive from various states. What is your own impression of the police? You know the reports we have about what is happening between the governor and the police in Anambra State, you know what is happening between the governor and the police in Borno State, you know what is happening between the governor and the police in Ogun State, you know what is happening between the governor and the police in Pleateau State, you know what is happening between the governor and the police in Bendel State, you know what is happening between the governor and the police in Kano State, tell me, what is your impression of the police?

President Shehu Shagari

NEW NATION: Sir, I will want you to give the true assessment of the PRP members who are following Aminu Kano since he was purportedly expelled as the leader from the party. It is your party's view, that he has no following, yet there are PRP legislators at the National Assembly who say they are Aminu Kano's followers and represent a large number of people. What is your opinion?

BALARABE MUSA: No! No! Out of 47 PRP members in the House of Representative, 38 are with us. In the case of the Senate only one is with us. But afterall there are 7 PRP members in the Senate and we have even lost two. One of them resigned to become District head and now Emir while the other one was removed. So actually PRP is left with only five Senators. One of them is with us while the other four are with Mallam. So out of say 52 members of the National Assembly, we have 39. The best Mallam has is 13.

Another interesting aspect is that these 13 are certainly not followed by all the people they represent at grassroots. And these they know. Certainly, they are not. All you need to do is follow Mallam during his rallies and see the disgraceful following he has very few people, 99 per cent of whom are NPN members.

NEW NATION: I want you to look at the entire situation as a man not as a governor, this time, of PRP. How do you look at the entire situation? Well, I'll give you a cue. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe described your trial as comparable to that of Jesus Christ. How do you look at the entire situation yourself as a man?

BALARABE MUSA: You, see, I don't know actually because I am directly involved, and you are asking me to make a personal assessment. Now this is a strictly personal assessment, I repeat.

I think it's unfortunate that it happened. Even though the NPN is a reactionary party and everybody knows how far they can go I think one can say they are gambling too much because they are in control of the federal government. And therefore they should be more concerned about stability, about law and order, but unfortunately they are giving a completely different impression. They are giving the impression that they are the cause of concern in Nigeria as far as stability and law and order are concerned. They are behind all the conflicts, political violence and reactions by all the government agencies. They are behind all of them, whereas they shouldn't be because they are the government in control of the federal government. They should be working for stability, law and order more than anybody. But they are not doing that.

NEW NATION: Alhaji, may I ask how much confidence you have in your deputy considering all your revolutionary programmes?

BALARABE MUSA: I have quite a lot of confidence in my deputy. Quite a lot. We have been together all along and you must remember that I nominated him as my deputy and I did so on the basis of full knowledge of him and his reliability.

NEW NATION: Your excellecny, certainly, inspte of your bold front you are taken aback if not depressed by your impeachment.

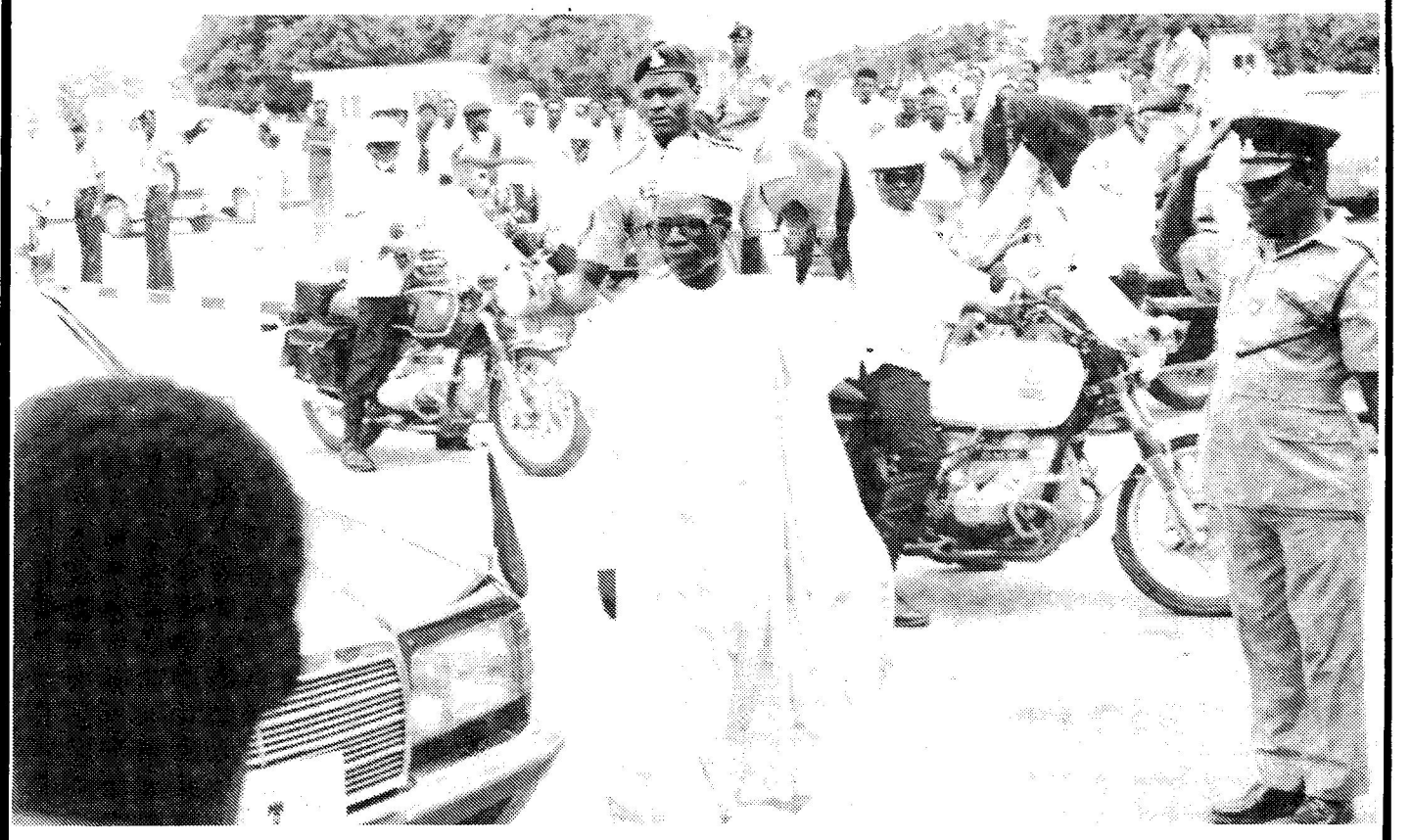
BALARABE MUSA: Haba! Haba! Why do you think I should be surprised? These people have already shown clearly how far they can go to achieve their objectives however reactionary these objectives are, and whatever the consequencies to the Nation. So why do you think I should be surprised?

Why all these persecutions embarrassments and harrassments? Simply because we are not a party like the NPN. We are a revolutionary party which has analysed the position even before taking the first step. And we know the obstacles ahead. As I told you, what is happening now is only some experience, a little experience in the process. An experience in the cause of a protracted struggle. I once told you, the press, that you should realise that what we have achieved so far in Nigeria, in other countries was achieved not by words of mouth and manouvering, but by the use of arms.

What has saved us from these problems? And people are talking about crisis, crisis, crisis, simply because there has been a lot of dust in the air.

By the way, let us talk about the impeachment. What is there in this impeachment. What does it mean? It is nothing. There would have been something if for instance my honour has been affected. Even my enemy has not talked about my honour being affected in the whole isssue. Now, why do you think we should be worried? My concern now is to protect the constitution, the legal system and my fundamental human rights, not just for myself but also in the interest of the country.

I am doing exactly what others did before us to make it possible for us now to do something. If others had not done even more than we are doing now, who would have been in this position challenging this reactionary force who is control of the economy and in control of everything. We are doing this simply because some people before us in the past stood up for justice. Some people sacrifised everything, some of them are still alive with us, some of them are still leading the fight.

So why should people loose their balance simply because the enemy has done what was expected of him. I mean, that is simply ridiculous.

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